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EU-27 Watch

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On the project

Due to the new treaty provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and the economic crises the enlarged EU of 27 member states is on the search for a new modus operandi while also continuing membership talks with candidate countries. The EU-27 Watch project is mapping out discourses on these and more issues in European policies all over Europe. Research institutes from all 27 member states and the four candidate countries give overviews on the discourses in their respective countries.

The reports focus on a **reporting period from December 2009 until May 2010**. This survey was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire that has been elaborated in March and April 2010. Most of the 31 reports were delivered in May 2010. This issue and all previous issues are available on the EU-27 Watch website: www.EU-27Watch.org.

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Croatia**Croatia will be next**

Senada Šelo Šabić*

Unanimous belief that Croatia will be the 28th EU member

The political elite express confidence that Croatia will be the next member state of the EU. Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor underlines that it is her belief, and that of her government, that Croatia will conclude negotiations this year and is first in line for the next round of enlargement.¹ This belief is reiterated by EU officials. Stefan Füle expects Croatia to be able to conclude negotiations in 2010, which means that the entry year could be 2012.² All parliamentary parties subscribe to this view. Vesna Pusić,³ the President of the National Committee for Monitoring Accession Negotiations, expressed conviction that Croatia could, but was doubtful whether this government can conclude negotiations this year.⁴

The conference “Croatia on the Eve of the EU Accession: the Path of Reform”, which took place in Zagreb on 29 and 30 April 2010, also discussed the issue thoroughly. All participants supported Croatian EU membership, said to also have a positive effect on the Southeast European region, but more effort had to be invested in the fields of the judiciary, public administration, the fight against corruption, and competition policy.⁵ The main problem was how to convince chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) Serge Brammertz that Croatia was not in the possession of the wartime artillery logbooks requested for the trial proceedings against the three Croatian generals.⁶ Zoran Milanović, leader of the main opposition party, the Social Democrats (SDP), spoke about the need to differentiate between very important and less important issues at a meeting of European Socialists in Brussels. Implementing reforms⁷ and depoliticising the judiciary and police is more important than locating artillery logbooks.⁸ Vesna Pusić saw this as an ironic twist of fate for Croatia. In her opinion, Croatian society had matured to the point that nobody could win any votes on an issue whether five pages or five tons of documents were sent to the Hague Tribunal.⁹

On 14 June 2010, Brammertz reported that some of the requested documents were still missing, but concluded that this fact should no longer block Croatia’s accession.¹⁰ The remaining three chapters – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, Competition Policy and Foreign, Security and Defence Policy – were opened on 30 June 2010.¹¹

Goran Čular, who teaches Croatian politics at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, discusses an awkward position in which the political elite in Croatia are in favour of joining the EU while public support remains around 50 percent. The government initiated changes in referendum procedures with the goal to increase the probability of securing the majority of votes for entry into the EU. Čular argues that this engineering process reduces the legitimacy of Croatian accession to the EU.¹²

On Iceland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration published the European Commission’s information on the results of the referendum in which 93 percent of Iceland’s citizens voted against refunding foreign citizens their savings in Icesave.¹³ Banka Magazine stressed that Iceland’s application for EU membership has been mainly urged by the harsh consequences of the economic and financial crisis.¹⁴ The Enlargement Commissioner, Stefan Füle, when asked directly whether Iceland can enter the EU together with Croatia, answered very vaguely that “it is not the Commission’s job to create timetables”.¹⁵ Most recently, the media published that the negotiations with Iceland would open in June 2010.¹⁶

It is in Croatia’s interest that all countries in the European southeast join the EU

Croatian entry into the EU is seen as a positive pull for other Southeast European (SEE) countries.¹⁷ At the summit of SEE leaders, Prime Minister Kosor supported a Euro-Atlantic perspective to the region of SEE.¹⁸ David Hudson, Head of the Political Section of the EU Delegation to Croatia, speaking at the earlier mentioned conference “Croatia on the Eve of the EU Accession: the Path of Reform”, said that the knowledge and understanding of the Western Balkans which Croatia brings into the EU is a strong asset. Dunja Jevak, Head of the Department for Bosnia and Herzegovina,

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Montenegro and Serbia at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, spoke about Croatia as a factor of stability in the region seen through regional incentives and NATO membership.¹⁹

Croatia interested in cooperation with the Union for the Mediterranean

Croatia, as a member of the Union for the Mediterranean, actively participates in ministerial conferences.²⁰ However, there is a perception that more could be done in strengthening the Union for the Mediterranean and making its framework more effective. 72 percent of Croatia's trade exchange is with Mediterranean countries, with exports worth 9.6 billion US-Dollars.²¹ These facts underscore the interest the country has for different forums for cooperation within the Mediterranean region.

¹ Marinko Petkovic: Croatia receives support on European path, *Vjesnik*, 9 April 2010; government of the Republic of Croatia: Prime Minister meets the Commissioner for Regional Policy, press release, available at: <http://www.vlada.hr/en/aktualne teme i projekti/aktualne teme/hrvatska i eu> (last access: 13 May 2010); government of the Republic of Croatia: Prime Minister receives European Parliament delegation, press release, available at: http://www.vlada.hr/en/naslovnica/priopcenja_za_javnost/2010/ozujak/predsjednica_vlade_s_izaslanstvom_euroskog_parlamenta (last access: 13 May 2010).

² Jurica Köbler: Croatia first in line for enlargement, *Vjesnik*, 2 February 2010; Augustin Palokaj: Prime Minister Kosor and European Enlargement Commissioner Füle discuss completion of EU entry talks this year, *Jutarnji list*, 25 February 2010.

³ Vesna Pusić is a former leader and now in the leadership of the Croatian People's Party. She was also a candidate in the last presidential elections, but lost in the first round.

⁴ Vesna Pusić speaking in Varaždin at the event marking European Day and the 65th anniversary of the victory over fascism, 8 May 2010, available at: <http://www.vesna-pusic.hns.hr/clanak.php?id=139250> (last access: 15 May 2010).

⁵ A detailed report on the Conference is available at: <http://www.imo.hr/node/825> (last access: 19 May 2010).

⁶ Stojan de Prato: Because of artillery logbooks EU again waits for Brammertz, 14 April 2010, available at: <http://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/zbog-topnickih-dnevnika-eu-opet-ceka-brammertza-clanak-126059> (last access: 16 May 2010); Chief prosecutor of International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, Serge Brammertz, said he still expected Croatia to deliver the documents sought by his office, adding that he would be able to make the final assessment of Croatia's cooperation with the tribunal only after visiting Zagreb in three weeks time, *tportal.hr*, 28 April 2010, available at: <http://daily.tportal.hr/65699/Brammertz-says-will-assess-Croatia-s-cooperation-in-3-weeks.html> (last access: 16 May 2010); Irena Frlan: From the Hague to the stars, *Novi list*, 1 February 2010.

⁷ Considerable effort is invested to build the social consensus for extensive reform process. Talking to journalists on 12 January 2010 after the Economic and Social Council meeting in which he received the unanimous support from the Council to carry out justice reforms, Ivan Šimonović, the Minister of Justice, said that such support is what builds consensus, the Union of the Autonomous Trade Unions in Croatia website, available at:

http://www.sssh.hr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1597 (last access: 20 May 2010).

⁸ SDP: In Chapter 23 to focus on necessary reforms, Brussels, 12 May 2010, available at: <http://www.sdp.hr/vijesti/aktualno/u-poglavlju-23-usredotociti-se-na-nuzne-reforme> (last access: 20 May 2010).

⁹ She thinks that the government should do all it can to convince the chief prosecutor that Croatia is not in the possession of the requested documents and that it should do so in the next couple of months before the current Minister of Justice, Ivan Šimonović, who has been appointed a UN Deputy Secretary-General for human rights, will leave for New York in mid August. His presence in the negotiations adds to Croatia's credibility. Rozita Vuković: Liberals are not essential for the HNS-SDP coalition, *Jutarnji list*, 15 May 2010.

¹⁰ In relation to the cooperation of Croatia, the prosecutor stated that the "the issue of the missing important documents related to Operation Storm in 1995 remains outstanding". The Prosecutor informed the Council that he had been assured by Croatian authorities that the activities suggested by his office one year ago will be undertaken and that Croatia will intensify its administrative investigation. He also expressed hope that these activities will result in effective action and concrete results and that Croatia will fully account for the missing documents. Prosecutor Brammertz's address before the Security Council, press release, ICTY, 18 June 2010, available at: <http://www.icty.org/sid/10423> (last access: 09 July 2010); the chief prosecutor "gave us a pass, in spite of artillery logbooks", wrote Augustin Palokaj: Croatia opens remaining chapters on 30 June, *Jutarnji list*, 14 June 2010.

¹¹ "By opening the last three chapters [...] Croatia made the step-of-no-return towards the membership", wrote Augustin Palokaj: The last three chapters opened, *Jutarnji list*, 1 July 2010; News section of *t-portal*: Croatia in the last 500 meters of the EU marathon, 30 June 2010, available at <http://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/75079/Hrvatska-u-zadnjih-500-metara-EU-maratona.html> (last access: 09 July 2010).

¹² Goran Čular: Decisions and rituals, *Političke analize*, Vol 1 No 1, February 2010, pp. 22-26.

¹³ The European Commission stressed that Iceland's accession to the EU has nothing to do with the Icesave affair, 10 March 2010, available at: <http://www.mvpei.hr/ei/default.asp?ru=1&q=201003100000003&sid=&jezik=1> (last access: 18 May 2010).

¹⁴ Deutsche Welle/Banka Magazine: Heavy crisis pushes Iceland to EU membership, 25 February 2010, available at: <http://www.bankamagazine.hr/Naslovnica/Vijesti/U mre% C5% BEi/tabid/320/View/Details/ItemID/57840/ttl/Deutsche-Welle-Teska-kriza-tjera-Island-u-EU/Default.aspx> (last access: 18 May 2010).

¹⁵ *Poslovni.hr*: EU Commission recommended opening accession negotiations with Iceland, 24 February 2010, available at: <http://www.poslovni.hr/140718.aspx> (last access: 15 May 2010).

¹⁶ The EC recommended opening negotiations with Iceland, however without a date, 11 May 2010, available at: <http://dalje.com/hr-svijet/odluka-o-pregovorima-eu-i-islanda-u-lipnju/304963> (last access: 18 May 2010).

¹⁷ At the meeting of liberal democratic parties from Western Balkans, held in Sarajevo on 7 May 2010, Vesna Pusić said that Croatia has a duty to use its experience to help countries in the region successfully carry out reforms required for EU membership. See: HRT: Liberal democrats for Western Balkans, available at: http://www.hrt.hr/index.php?id=48&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=23&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=72390&cHash=d8c5db1941 (last access: 15 May 2010).

¹⁸ Serbian President Tadić did not attend the summit since Kosovo's Prime Minister was there. Kosor expressed hope that the next summit would include leaders from the entire region. Ivan Botteri: Kosor sent a message to Tadić: 'EU path requires some

courage', Slobodna dalmacija, 21 March 2010; media sees it as an act of goodwill and good neighbourly relations that Croatia has handed the translation of the *acquis communautaire* to its SEE neighbours, said to cost 8 million Euros.

¹⁹ Available at: <http://www.imo.hr/node/825> (last access: 19 May 2010).

²⁰ The last one was the Conference of Water Management Ministers in Barcelona, 13 April 2010.

²¹ Jagoda Vukušić: Mediterranean is the biggest trade partner of Croatia, interview with Tonči Tadić, President of the Euro-Mediterranean Forum, Novi list, 7 January 2010.

Questionnaire for EU-27 Watch, No. 9

Reporting period December 2009 until May 2010 – Deadline for country reports 21 May

All questions refer to the position/assessment of your country's government, opposition, political parties, civil society organisations, pressure groups, press/media, and public opinion. Please name sources wherever possible!

1. Implementation of the Lisbon Treaty

On the 1 December 2009 the EU-reform ended with the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty. However, the new treaty provisions still have to be implemented. Some procedures and conditions have to be determined. In other cases, procedures, power relations, and decision-making mechanisms will change due to the new provisions.

- How is the work of the new President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, assessed in your country? Which changes to the role of the rotating council presidency are expected?
- How is the work of the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, assessed in your country? Please take into particular consideration both her role within the European Commission and her relationship to the Council of the European Union.
- On 25 March 2010 a "Proposal for a Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service" was presented. How is this concept perceived in your country? Which alternatives are discussed?
- On 31 March 2010 the European Commission presented a proposal defining the rules and procedures for the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). What are the expectations for the ECI in your country? What are the various positions concerning the rules and procedures?

2. Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Commission has given its opinion on Iceland's application for EU-membership and a decision from the Council is expected before the end of June. Croatia seems to have settled its border dispute with Slovenia. Against this background:

- Which countries does your country expect to become members of the European Union in the next enlargement round? What are the opinions in your country on the membership of these countries?
- How are the membership perspectives of those countries discussed, which are not expected to become a member in the next enlargement round?

The Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean were the last major projects dealing with the European neighbourhood:

- How are these projects assessed in your country?

3. European economic policy and the financial and economic crisis

The European Council agreed on 25/26 March on the key elements of the Europe 2020 strategy, the successor of the Lisbon strategy. While not being on the formal agenda the economic and financial situation in Greece was discussed. The European Council agreed on a finance package combining bilateral loans from the eurozone and financing through the International Monetary Fund.

- How is the finance package for Greece assessed in your country? Are there any opinions on the process, how the agreement on the package was reached?
- Which lessons should be drawn from the Greek case for a reform of the Stability and Growth Pact?
- How is the idea of "a strong coordination of economic policies in Europe" perceived in your country? What concepts of an European economic governance are discussed in your country and which role do they assign to the Euro group?
- How is the Europe 2020 strategy discussed in your country? What are the priorities for the Europe 2020 strategy from your country's perspective?

4. Climate and energy policy

The climate conference in Copenhagen took note of the Copenhagen Accord but did not reach a binding agreement. The next conference of the parties (COP 16 & CMP 6) will take place at the end of November 2010.

- How is the Copenhagen conference assessed in your country? Please take into consideration the negotiation strategy of European Union and the results of the conference.
- Does the European Union need to change its own energy and climate policy in order to give a new impulse to the international negotiations?
- Is a global agreement within the UNFCCC the best strategy to fight climate change? If not, which alternative strategy should the European Union follow?
- What is your country's position on financing mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries?

5. Current issues and discourses in your country

Which other topics and discourses are highly salient in your country but not covered by this questionnaire?